

## Senator Tom Udall's Legislative Actions to Address the Novel Coronavirus/COVID-19

### Funding

- ◆ Senator Udall voted to pass the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* to provide immediate and badly-needed relief to New Mexicans grappling with the coronavirus pandemic. The **\$2 trillion** package includes key provisions to support New Mexico, including:
  - Direct payments of **\$1,200** to individual New Mexicans, **\$2,400** for married couples and **\$500** per child. More information on direct payments can be found [HERE](#).
  - A dramatic expansion of unemployment insurance to cover more New Mexicans and provide more benefits during this crisis. The extended unemployment insurance program increases the maximum unemployment benefit by **\$600** per week and ensures that laid-off workers, on average, will receive their full pay for **four months**. More information on the expanded unemployment benefits can be found [HERE](#).
  - Small business provisions that include **\$377 billion** in small business aid including up to **\$10 million** Payment Protection Program loans for small business up to 500 employees. The loans will be converted to grants so long as employers maintain their previous payroll through December 31, 2020. More information on the small business assistance legislation can be found [HERE](#).
  - Resources for hospitals and frontline health care workers, including more than **\$150 billion** for the health care system, and a “Marshall Plan for Hospitals” that injects major funding for hospitals and medical facilities. The bill injects **\$100 billion** into our hospitals and health system. More information on the “Marshall Plan” that Udall and Senate Democrats helped secure for New Mexico can be found [HERE](#).
  - Resources for Tribes and Native communities, notably an **\$8 billion** Tribal Government Relief fund to ensure Indian Tribes have direct "one stop" access to COVID-19 resources for economic recovery and continuation of essential government services based on local needs. The agreement also contains over **\$2 billion** in emergency supplemental funding for Indian Tribes, urban Indian health programs, and Native communities, including **\$1.032 billion** for the Indian Health Service, with significant funds put in the field through Tribal shares and urban organizations. More information on the Tribal provisions that Udall fought for can be found [HERE](#). Information on Tribal resources in the bill can be found [HERE](#).
  - More information on the *CARES Act* can be found [HERE](#).

- Funding from the CARES Act has already reached New Mexico. Communities across the state receive **over \$16.7 million** in emergency housing assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). New Mexico received the \$16,776,942 in funding in three HUD programs, which include the Community Development Block Grant program, Emergency Solutions Grants and the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) Program. These funds will help New Mexico keep more people in homes at a time of serious economic disruption and public health crisis. More information on the grants can be found [HERE](#).
- Local governments in New Mexico will receive a total of \$133,196,781 in emergency transit grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The funds are part of a first wave of grants from the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act that the entire New Mexico delegation voted to pass Congress. More information on the grant can be found [HERE](#).
- ◆ Senator Udall voted to pass the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020*, the second phase of coronavirus response funding and legislation. which provides free testing for anyone who needs it, emergency unemployment insurance, an expansion of paid sick leave, food security assistance, and expanded Medicaid funding. More information on the funding package can be found [HERE](#).
  - The Medicaid funding is estimated to provide an additional amount of **\$250 million** in federal Medicaid funding for New Mexico over a 12-month period. You can find more information on this funding [HERE](#).
- ◆ Senator Udall voted in favor of the **\$8.3 billion** supplemental coronavirus response package (H.R. 6074), which was signed into law on March 6, 2020. More information on the federal funding package can be found [HERE](#).
  - New Mexico has been allocated **\$6.4 million** in the funding package, and [has already received \\$500,000](#) of the total funds to bolster the state's epidemiology and laboratory capacity.
  - The state has also received **\$1,175,940** from the Department of Health and Human Services for [emergency grants](#) to **16** community health centers, Pueblo health centers and Urban Indian Organizations on the front lines of New Mexico's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding to health centers across nine New Mexico counties will provide some immediate resources for health centers to respond to COVID-19 while continuing to support essential primary care services to underserved populations.
  - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will distribute the additional **\$5.9 million** through the CDC Public Health Crisis Cooperative (CoAg).

## Legislation

- ◆ Senator Udall introduced a bill to ensure that Tribal healthcare systems have the same access to critical emergency funding resources as the rest of the country. The bill, ***CDC Tribal Public Health Security and Preparedness Act*** (S. 3486) This legislation would allow Tribes to apply directly to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) program and authorizes the CDC to make any necessary modifications to the program to fit the needs of Tribal applicants. The CDC PHEP grant program seeks to increase the capacity and response timeliness of local public health entities during public health emergencies. More information can be found [HERE](#).
- ◆ Senator Udall led a bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers to introduce ***The Border Health Security Act of 2020*** (S. 3436). This legislation would strengthen national security and invest in the public health of border communities by updating and strengthening bilateral cooperation with Mexican and Canadian public health organizations. The legislation also authorizes \$10.5 million per year in grant programs that address public health issues on the northern and southern borders for infectious disease testing, monitoring, and surveillance, health disparities, workforce training and development, and bioterrorism. Further information on the bill can be found [HERE](#).
- ◆ Senator Udall joined U.S. Senator Tina Smith (D-Minn.) and a number of their Democratic Senate colleagues to introduce the ***Free COVID-19 Testing Act***, which would expand free tests to confirm coronavirus (COVID-19) infections. Private insurers would be barred from imposing limits like prior authorization for testing. For uninsured individuals, this legislation would cover the cost of lab fees, and states would have the option and new incentives to cover COVID-19 diagnostic testing and related health care services through their Medicaid programs. Further information can be found [HERE](#).
- ◆ Senator Udall and Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) introduced the ***Tribal Medical Supplies Stockpile Access Act***, legislation that would guarantee that the Indian Health Service (IHS), Tribal health authorities, and urban Indian organizations have access to the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), a federal repository of drugs and medical supplies that can be tapped if a public health emergency could exhaust local supplies. Currently, IHS and Tribal health authorities' access to the SNS is very limited and is not guaranteed in the SNS statute. In contrast, states' and large municipalities' public health authorities have ready access to the SNS. The lawmakers' bill comes as the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) indicated that IHS is likely to face shortages of necessary equipment as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) continues to spread. More information on the bill can be found [HERE](#).
- ◆ Senator Udall joined Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) to introduce the ***Natural Disaster and Emergency Ballot Act of 2020***, legislation that would ensure New Mexicans and all Americans are still able to vote safely by expanding early in-person voting and no-excuse absentee vote-by-mail to all states, and allowing voters who did not receive an absentee ballot to use a printable ballot currently only provided for military and overseas voters. The legislation comes following widespread confusion surrounding Ohio's primary this week, and following announcements by Louisiana and Georgia officials that they are postponing their April presidential primaries. Further information on the bill can be found [HERE](#).

## Executive Oversight and Accountability

1. Senator Udall led a bipartisan group of 27 senators to send an urgent letter to Vice President Mike Pence urging the Trump administration to mount a COVID-19 response that meaningfully engages with Native communities and Tribal leaders to ensure that Indian Country. You can view that letter [HERE](#).
2. Senator Udall joined all Senate Democrats in a letter urging the Trump administration to prioritize American workers for his response to COVID-19 over the bottom lines of big corporations. He is urging the White House to adopt practices that will benefit workers such as paid sick leave, food security, and supporting anti-price gouging protections. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).

3. Senator Udall also joined Senate colleagues to ask for information about how the Trump administration is issuing guidance to protect populations particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. In the letter, the senators are asking Trump administration public health officials to protect nursing home residents, families, and workers from the spread of COVID-19. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
4. Senator Udall joined Senator Mark Warner (D-Va.) in a letter urging the Administration to consider adopting practices that will benefit workers such as paid sick leave, food security, and supporting anti-price gouging protections. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
5. Senator Udall also sent a request with Senator Jack Reed (D-R.I.) to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services that the Trump Administration allow for a special enrollment period for the Affordable Care Act for those uninsured who contract COVID-19. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
6. Senator Udall joined Senator Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and the Democratic members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee in a letter to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) requesting information on the VA's preparedness to treat veterans throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency, in addition to the VA's "Fourth Mission" to support the national health care system in a national emergency. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
7. Senator Udall signed a letter with 26 fellow senators urging President Trump to immediately issue an executive order directing agencies to utilize telework capabilities to the maximum extent possible for federal workers. After the senators' letter was sent on Monday, the Trump administration issued [further directions](#) to federal agencies to expand telework to federal offices outside the D.C. region. With its important federal facilities and significant public lands, there are over [21,900](#) federal civilian employees in New Mexico, according to the White House Office of Personnel Management. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
8. Senator Udall and 17 other Democrats sent a letter to Senate leadership outlining an important new proposal to provide Americans with **\$2,000** in direct cash payments as the economic fallout from the novel coronavirus outbreak continues to escalate. In the letter, the senators outline a proposal to provide a \$2,000 immediate cash payment to every adult, child (or non-child dependent), and recipient of Social Security, Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The proposal calls for additional cash payments should the public health crisis extend, or if the unemployment rate increases. The payments would phase-out for higher-income taxpayers. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
9. Senator Udall and the entire New Mexico congressional delegation sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services leadership requesting the release the state of New Mexico's full allotment of personal protective equipment (PPE), such as protective gloves and masks, for health care providers responding to the novel Coronavirus emergency. Currently, the state of New Mexico has received 25 percent of its full allotment of PPE from the Strategic National Stockpile, a federal repository of drugs and medical supplies that can be tapped if a public health emergency could exhaust local supplies. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
10. Senator Udall joined all eight Democrats on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo requesting Pompeo immediately present a plan to Congress on the U.S. Department of State's efforts to assist Americans abroad seeking to return home. Senate offices have received a substantial increase in calls for help from constituents and concerned families who have reported they are unable to secure flights home to the U.S., and in some cases, have had difficulty contacting U.S. Embassies and consulates. Udall and the New Mexico congressional delegation also released a statement and followed the statement with a formal letter calling on Pompeo to act swiftly to assist constituents abroad. The Senate Democrats' letter can be viewed [HERE](#), the New Mexico delegation's statement can be viewed [HERE](#) and the New Mexico delegation's letter [HERE](#).

11. Senator Udall joined Senator Chris Murphy and 14 Senate Democrats in a letter to the CEOs of the seven largest health insurance companies calling on them to cover all COVID-19 related treatment and services without cost-sharing requirements and allowing Americans to get tested, assessed and treated without the fear of unexpected medical bills and remove economic barriers from addressing the current public health crisis. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
12. Senator Udall joined Senators Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) and Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) along with 17 of their colleagues in condemning President Trump's partial invocation of the Defense Production Act (DPA), calling on President Trump to immediately implement all Defense Production Act powers to massively scale up production of testing kits, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) such as respirators and gloves, ventilators, and other critical materials that our country needs during the coronavirus emergency. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) estimates the United States could need up to 3.5 billion respirators during the coronavirus emergency, but the Strategic National Stockpile holds only 12 million respirators. Congress amended DPA in 2009 to explicitly extend those authorities to support domestic preparedness and response to national emergencies, such as the coronavirus pandemic. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#). Udall also joined every member of the Senate Democratic Caucus in a letter to the president and vice president demanding answers about medical supplies and equipment in the Strategic National Stockpile, critical to addressing the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
13. Senator Udall and five Senate Democrats sent a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) calling for a **\$4 billion** economic relief package to America's creative economy, which is at severe risk because of the COVID-19. The senators are urging Senate leadership to use the NEA as the critical government grant-making organization to sustain the creative economy by disbursing the funds to artists and artisans across the country and ensuring that artists and artisans are eligible for further economic stimulus measures from government agencies such as the Small Business Administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
14. Senator Udall and the entire New Mexico congressional delegation sent a letter to the U.S. Secretary of Defense and the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to support Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's request to deploy a fully equipped Combat Support Hospital to Albuquerque, New Mexico and mobilize additional military hospital resources to New Mexico communities under strain to meet the surge in new COVID-19 patients. Despite the state and local public health officials' proactive measures to reduce community spread of COVID-19, New Mexico is particularly vulnerable to a surge in COVID-19 patients due to the state's limited hospital capacity and rural distribution of the state's population. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
15. Senator Udall joined 16 Senate Democratic colleagues in a letter to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) urging the agency to protect consumers from price gouging during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the letter, the senators call on the agency to use the full extent of its authority to prevent abusive price gouging on consumer health products—like disinfectant spray and hand sanitizer—that members of the public need to protect themselves and their loved ones from the spread of the novel coronavirus. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
16. Senator Udall joined 42 senators and 82 representatives in sending a bipartisan letter to U.S. Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Alex Azar urging him to direct funding included in the recently passed CARES Act to sustain small and rural hospitals. The CARES Act created a \$100 billion grant program for hospitals and other health care providers combatting the coronavirus pandemic. According to the New Mexico Hospital Association, 33 of their 46 members serve primarily rural areas. Ten hospitals in the state were designated as Critical Access Hospitals by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in FY2019. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).
17. Senator Udall led a bipartisan, bicameral group of 18 senators and 12 U.S. representatives in writing to President Donald J. Trump requesting that federal agencies implementing the Tribal provisions of the CARES Act do so in a manner that upholds the federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Indian Tribes, respects Tribal sovereignty and provides for meaningful government-to-government consultation with Indian Tribes. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).

18. Senator Udall joined 42 senators in a letter calling for the U.S. Treasury Department and Social Security Administration to ensure that all Social Security beneficiaries will automatically receive the direct assistance included in the CARES Act without having to file tax returns. Udall and his colleagues expressed alarm to the Treasury Department that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) released contradictory guidance earlier this week stating that Social Security beneficiaries would need to file tax returns in order to receive direct payments. This guidance contradicts clear direction from the CARES Act that the president signed into law last week ensuring that the Treasury Department had the authority to send automatic direct cash assistance to Social Security beneficiaries regardless of whether they file taxes or not. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).

Following calls from Udall and other senators, the U.S. Treasury Department announced that Social Security recipients will automatically receive direct cash assistance included in the CARES Act without having to file tax returns. More information on the Trump administration's reversal can be found [HERE](#).

Senator Udall followed this exchange with the Treasury Department with another letter alongside 47 colleagues, calling on the Trump administration to issue stimulus checks automatically to recipients of benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs or Social Security. In their letter, the senators pointed out that these are two groups with large amounts of non-filers and groups that the federal government has the necessary information to deliver the stimulus checks automatically. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).

19. Senator Udall sent a letter to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler, asking detailed oversight questions about how the agency is adjusting its operations in light of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) while continuing its critical mission to protect human health and the environment. The senators also noted concerns with EPA's recently released COVID-19 enforcement discretion policy and asked the agency to commit to publishing promptly on its website the details of any enforcement waivers it issues, asked EPA to commit to extend all rulemaking comment periods and to revise public meeting processes following its refusal to do so for the review of its controversial risk evaluation of the toxic chemical trichloroethylene, and expressed concern that, "EPA is rushing to finalize many of its more controversial rules to weaken pollution standards" in "a deregulatory atmosphere" that EPA employees describe as "relentless." More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).

Senator Udall later sent a letter with Senators Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) and Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) to the U.S. Secretary of the Department of Interior, David Bernhardt, urging him to immediately suspend any policy proposals or actions unrelated to the COVID-19 emergency that require a public comment period until the threats of COVID-19 have subsided. The senators sent the letter as New Mexicans and Americans across the country are focused on the safety and well-being of themselves and their families during this global crisis, meaning public comment periods on policy actions at this time cannot fully reflect public opinion and meaningful participation. In New Mexico, DOI oversees approximately 27 million acres, about 34 percent of the state's total lands. Just last week, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), an agency within DOI, entered into a public comment period for the sale of federal public land in Eddy, Lea and Chaves counties while COVID-19 confirmed cases have jumped to 403 with 7 confirmed deaths across the state. More information on the letter can be found [HERE](#).